

**WILLIAMSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
2005 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC FORUM #4
Thursday, November 4, 2004**

A Community Conversation on the Comprehensive Plan was held by the Williamsburg Planning Commission on Thursday, November 4, 2004, at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Building, 401 North Boundary Street.

ATTENDANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Present were Commissioners Young, Pons, Hertzler, McBeth, Rose and Smith. Commissioner Friend was absent. Also present were Planning Director Nester, Zoning Administrator Murphy, Secretary Scott, and Codes Compliance Administrator Catlett.

Mr. Young called the meeting to order, and welcomed the approximately 65 citizens in attendance, and introduced the Planning Commission members and staff who were present.

Mr. Nester made brief introductory comments, discussing 2000 Census information for the City, land uses, owner and renter occupied residential buildings, and noted that the major issues to be discussed at the meeting would include: Housing - Pressures on residential areas adjacent to the College and Bed & Breakfast regulations; College – Cooperation with the College to ensure that the improvement and expansion of facilities on and near campus respects the character of the community and the College; and Infrastructure - Highway, pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Housing Issues, facilitated by Elaine McBeth

- Could we have a new regulation that requires all students to live in owner-occupied housing – e.g. rent rooms in single family owner-occupied dwellings
- Do we want to maintain this area as a single family area? When homes are on the market, will they be for owner-occupants, or for investor owners who rent to students.
- Expansion of the three-person rule to a more-than-three-person rule favors investor owners over owner-occupants
- Most students live on-campus. Those living off campus are concerned with the three-person rule. Houses should be looked at individually based on size, bedrooms, bathrooms, parking. A possibility would be to limit the amount of parking permits issued.
- Zoning Administrator Carolyn Murphy explained the enforcement of the three-person rule.

- Codes Compliance Administrator explained the Rental Inspection Program, and said that the purpose is to maintain and improve the quality of the housing stock, not to control college students.
- More regulations needed for B&B uses, including better enforcement.
- Many graduate/professional students need to live off-campus – not sufficient on-campus housing provided. Many of these students want quieter residential settings.
- There are over 30 B&B's in Williamsburg, with only one problem incident being reported. B&Bs try to be part of their residential neighborhoods.
- Students should be separated from the rental issue. The College should be involved in maintaining rules and laws. Renters need to understand maintenance issues.
- Student issues shouldn't be generalized – we need to qualify what we are saying. If a house is a problem, it needs to be addressed individually.
- The issue is not students, but community. Do we want to promote home ownership?
- Three people in a house means three cars.

College Issues, facilitated by Marc Rose

- A show of hands indicated that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the persons present were homeowners, and $\frac{1}{4}$ were students. Three landlords were also present.
- Mr. Rose said that with a new College President, change is possible. How can we anticipate and incorporate this into the plan?
- What would be the ideal relationship between the College and the Community?
 - College is often not forthcoming with the neighborhoods
 - Would like to see the College show more respect for our town – College owned homes are an absolute disgrace. Many citizens raised their hands to indicate agreement.
 - Freshman class officers are putting together a “care for William & Mary day” to improve things.
 - The College has been subject to many budget cuts, which affects maintenance – the money is not there. This is one of the reasons for the Charter initiative.
 - What is the College going to do about parking, and what about students parking in the neighborhoods. (Mr. Rose noted that work on the new 500 space parking garage would start in February '05).
 - What is the College's responsibility for providing student housing? If more housing in the City becomes owner-occupied, students will be forced to live further out, which will generate more traffic and require more parking, or improvement in public transportation.
 - The Barksdale dorm will add about 100 beds to the inventory. The College guarantees housing for three years. There needs to be less of a divide between the College and community.
 - There was a consensus that there needs to be more dialogue and action by the College – the College needs to provide more housing.
 - Students and citizens need to come together as one community.

- Students park in neighborhoods to get around College parking regulations.
 - It is important to acknowledge the good will of the students – many are volunteers in the community.
 - Need to foster relationships with students living in the neighborhoods.
- New College Buildings
 - Concerned also with future expansion of churches along Jamestown Road – could take down existing residences.
 - Concerned about traffic – it is getting harder to get in and out of Burns Lane. New buildings create more density – how can we deal with it?
 - Roads need to be reopened through the College to facilitate traffic flow.
 - The College hasn't been institutionally responsive to the neighborhoods.
 - Major non-college property owners need to be included in any discussions.
 - Concerned by the fact that the only access to the new College buildings is along Jamestown Road.

Infrastructure Issues, facilitated by Audrey Smith

- Campus Drive would function worse if it is configured with three lanes.
- There is a need to underground the electric wires to reduce power outages.
- Making Campus Drive three lanes makes the problem worse – dumps more cars onto Jamestown Road.
- The traffic circle will not work.
- The City needs to take a strong position with the College administration – not convinced that City Council and City officials are doing enough.
- The Jamestown Road roundabout is too small to function, and there will be problems with pedestrians.
- Roundabout is the dumbest idea I have heard, and it is dangerous for bicyclists.
- Concerned with speed limit – it should be 25 mph from Rt. 199 to College Corner.
- Consensus that the roundabout is a bad idea.
- Narrow streets are needed to slow down traffic.
- Council member Chohany said that criticizing the roundabout is premature. It is being studied further, and it is worth our time and consideration to look at the idea. City Council is also constantly talking to the College administration.
- Traffic calming is needed on Jamestown Road.
- Changing the geometry of Campus Drive will make getting out of Burns Lane more difficult.
- Students are not the only cause for traffic – the downtown is growing. The Prince George Parking Garage and higher density housing will increase traffic further.
- The crosswalk striping can be slick when wet.
- Improvement of Quarterpath Road could alleviate some of the traffic along Jamestown Road.
- Public transportation is part of the solution, as is satellite parking for students.
- Public transportation instead of improvements for the automobile.
- Install a stop sign for southbound traffic at College Corner.

Vision for Jamestown Road Area, facilitated by Jesse Young

Mr. Young asked citizens to voice their vision for the Jamestown Road Neighborhood Focus Area. The following responses were made:

- Like the community, College, interaction with students, sense of belonging, but concerned about the deterioration of inner-city neighborhoods.
- Walkability, cars stop for pedestrians in crosswalks, so much of the College is open to the community.
- Community is important to students, and continuing and improving student/citizen dialog is important.
- Important to continue to be able to get what you need on foot – day to day services for residents, near their neighborhoods, are needed.
- Consider who is not here, and invite them to the meetings.
- Mr. Young said that we need to look at things positively, and work for a solution to improve the community. This is better than just criticizing.
- College, Colonial Williamsburg, walking, tourists make for a vital, vibrant place. Good neighborhoods are important, but you can have a community only up to a point when you have higher density.
- A lot of stores have become too tourist-centered. Places that are more student-friendly are needed.
- Need to find success stories from other college towns that have worked things out.
- Need to find ways to:
 - Keep residentially zoned neighborhoods residential – problems with grandfathered B&Bs.
 - Promote a community that encourages people to move in and live.
 - Places for high rise buildings, etc., but not in the AP District.
 - Maintain our single family neighborhoods.
 - Enforce fixing up of rental property.

Council member Chohany complemented the Planning Commission and staff on the Comprehensive Plan update process.

Mr. Young thanked citizens for attending and discussing issues with the Planning Commission. He also said that additional comments could be submitted in writing using the comment form, as well as by email to the Planning Department.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Jesse Young, Chairman
Williamsburg Planning Commission